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Overview of Trauma Response

“The core of our work in dealing with PTS is one simple message: What you are having is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.”

Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell

TRAUMA

Trauma is any event outside the usual realm of human experience that is markedly distressing (e.g., evokes reactions of intense fear, helplessness, horror, etc.)

Such traumatic stressors usually involve the perceived threat to one's physical integrity or to the physical integrity of someone in close proximity.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Critical Incident Stress is an acute emotional, cognitive, and physical reaction that results from an exposure to a powerful, negative, terrifying, threatening, or grotesque stimulus, or to an overwhelming demand of circumstance.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Crisis intervention is a temporary, active, and supportive entry into the life situation of an individual or a group during a period of extreme distress.

GOALS OF CRISIS INTERVENTION

Goals of crisis intervention include:

- Normalization of reactions and the facilitation of normal recovery processes
- Providing information and resources to aid in recovery and resilience, and
- To help identify those individuals who may need more significant professional assistance and help facilitate that connection.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

Recommendations for Immediate action for Disaster-Affected Individuals:

- Promoting a sense of psychological safety.
- Promoting calming.
- Promoting a sense of self- and community-efficacy.
- Promoting connectedness.
- Instilling hope.

CRISIS INTERVENTIONS

The Principles of Crisis Intervention (from the ICISF - International Critical Incident Stress Foundation):

- Simple - People respond to simple, not complex issues, during a crisis.
- Brief - short contacts from a few minutes up to an hour.
- Pragmatic - Suggestions must be practical if they are to work.
- Immediate - A crisis reaction demands rapid intervention.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Signs and Symptoms of critical incident stress:

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Behavioral

PHYSICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Physical Signs and Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Chills
- Unusual Thirst
- Chest Pains
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Soreness

COGNITIVE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Cognitive Signs and Symptoms:

- Uncertainty
- Confusion
- Nightmares
- Disorientation
- Compromised decision making.
- Self-doubt
- Fixation with the event
- Apathy
- Sense of Danger

EMOTIONAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Emotional Signs and Symptoms:

- Grief
- Fear
- Guilt
- Intense anger
- Apprehension
- Irritability
- Chronic anxiety

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Behavioral Signs and Symptoms:

- Inability to rest
- Withdrawal
- Antisocial behavior
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Loss/increase of appetite
- Hyper-mania
- Exaggerated startle reaction

COPING MECHANISMS: WHAT YOU CAN DO AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO (1 of 3)

Coping Mechanisms – *Remember - simple, brief, pragmatic and immediate:*

- Within the first 24 to 48 hours.... period of strenuous physical exercise alternated with period of relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions to a stressful situation.
- Structure your time to keep busy.
- Remind yourself, “What I am having is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.”
- Talk is one of the most healing mechanisms: Share your story and your reactions.

COPING MECHANISMS: WHAT YOU CAN DO AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO (2 of 3)

Coping Mechanisms – *What you can do and encourage others to do (Continued)*

- Keep your life as normal as possible. Do not make any major changes.
- Writing - journal work can be a great comfort.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible, which will give you the feeling of control over your life.
- Realize that those around you are under stress and may not act or react in a manner you would normally expect.

COPING MECHANISMS: WHAT YOU CAN DO AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO (3 of 3)

Coping Mechanisms – *What you can do and encourage others to do (Continued)*

- Respect people's desire to talk, or not talk about it.
- Practice and preach self-stewardship.
- Pay attention to your body- it will never lie to you.

LEVELS OF POST TRAUMA INTERVENTIONS

Type	Intervention	Activity	Timing	Trigger
Informal Accessible	Self-attunement	Paying attention to individual reaction and sense of disruption Body-Mind-Emotional Awareness	Soon after exposure to event	The event itself
	Conversations with others	Approaching- Listening- Articulating-Externalizing both Thoughts and Reactions	As the event is experienced by others who need to process	Realization of impact
	Strategy development and interventions	Identification of coping strategies. Finding external resources for guidance and information	When we move from impact of event to internalization	Need for identifying coping and resolution strategies
Formal Structured	Structured Small Group Process	Small groups convened by a skilled and trained facilitator. Sharing reactions and resources. Social/educational purpose.	When the impact is deeper. Socially experienced and commonly felt.	Realization of need to process with others
	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	Highly structured 7 step process facilitated by specialist in CISD	First responders and those directly impacted soon after the event.	Proximity or relationship to traumatic event becomes central experience
	Cognitive Processing Therapy	CPT is well established therapeutic intervention using cognitive restructuring and controlled explore to memories and reminders	Deep one to one therapy with trained mental health professional	Ongoing and chronic unresolved post traumatic stress

Post Traumatic Stress / Psychological First Aid Resources

The Department of Veteran Affairs provides resources for helping survivors: Ealy Interventions Following Disaster and Mass Violence. Including Immediate Actions for Disaster Affected Individuals- and Psychological First Aid.

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/disaster_earlyintervention_tx.asp

SAMHSA- the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration created this inventory of Disaster Behavioral Health Interventions. The inventory outlines early interventions (first 4 weeks)- Intermediate Interventions (6 months- 1 year) and Long-Term interventions (1 year or later).

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac-disaster-behavioral-health-interventions-inventory.pdf>

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation is the primary provider of training in CIS.

<https://icisf.org/a-primer-on-critical-incident-stress-management-cism/>

The CDC provides guidelines on coping skills and selfcare.

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has great resources on Psychological First Aid:

<https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery/about-pfa>

Online Psychological First Aid Courses

Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR) are promising practices for disaster behavioral health response and recovery. Both PFA and SPR were developed by the National Center for PTSD and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, as well as other individuals involved in coordinating and participating in disaster response and recovery. PFA and SPR intervention strategies are intended for use with children, adolescents, parents and caretakers, families, and adults who are survivors or witnesses exposed to disaster or terrorism.

PFA and SPR can also be provided to first responders and other disaster relief workers. While grounded in the same foundations of disaster response and recovery, there are several differences between PFA and SPR.

<https://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=11>

The course from the "grandfather" of psychological first aid, George Everly at Johns Hopkins

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/psychological-first-aid>

There is also an incredible local resource from the Ohana Center for Excellence.

<https://aanhpi-ohana.org/resources/hawaii-wildfire-resources/>

Healing 2.0: Life After Loss

Hidden Brain

You've probably heard that people who lose a loved one may go through what are known as the "five stages" of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. But many people find that their grief doesn't follow this model at all. In the latest installment of our Healing 2.0 series, we revisit our 2022 conversation with resilience researcher Lucy Hone. Lucy shares the techniques she learned to cope after a devastating loss in her own life.

Listen on Apple Podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hidden-brain/id1028908750?i=1000634686482>

QUESTIONS

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

- **Resources:** Note that there are two separate PDF handout files showing the Levels of Post-Trauma Interventions, and the Resources listed in the previous slides. Printed copies of the handouts will be provided to in-person attendees at the meeting, and the PDF files will be posted on the EPO website in the Zoom Replays for 2024.
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